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FROM COLLINS.

1. Quat called on me 1800 May 3 at my request. In reply to question, he said since April 30 situation has become very serious owing to Revolutionary Committee. Diem is a prisoner of Committee and lets it do as it will. Committee is clearly Viet Minh in orientation. Quat said tone of articles appearing May 3 attacking Bao Dai indicates this. One paper, Dan Dun, May 3, reproached Bao Dai for having broken with Resistance in 1946. Quat said charge of this character could come only from Viet Minh. Control of Revolutionary Committee is shared by Viet Minh and Cao Dai. Cao Dai want to seize power, establish Cao Dai as state religion, and make Cao Dai armed forces hard core of National Army. Committee is now for Diem but only as temporary expedient. Thoai told Quat May 1 Diem has been taken over by Committee. Committee is making inroads in National Army and has used Army radio to broadcast Committee's slogans to be used in mass meetings throughout territory.

2. I asked Quat how Committee could be counteracted. Quat replied he had talked with many persons during day, all of whom recognized gravity of situation and possibility of complete Viet Minh control over Committee. He said Diem must be brought to understand the danger of playing with Committee, ~~[illegible]~~ and should be persuaded to break with it. If possible ...

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By NND 809053

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possible, Phuong should be detached from Committee, but Quat admitted this would be difficult to accomplish. I told Quat I believed Diem recognized danger and wanted to broaden Committee. Quat said he had heard same report but felt there was no possibility of diluting Committe which is dominated by armed thugs. All depends now on Diem. If he is truly patriotic and looks to the future, he should cut off Committee's financial support, all of which comes from him. Diem should also censor newspapers which have printed defaced portraits of Bao Dai and defamatory articles in recent days. He should also exert restraining influence on radio. This is in his power since anti-Bao Dai campaign could not have been undertaken without his consent.

3. I told Quat I intended see Diem May 4 to reiterate warning against Revolutionary Committee. Meanwhile, I wished find out as much as possible about membership of Committee. Quat said that following four of Committee's executive were either active Viet Minh or strongly Viet Minh in political orientation:

HO HAN SON, active Viet Minh at present;

NHI LANG, with Viet Minh until 1951;

DOAN TRUNG CON;

HOANG PHO, member of Journalist Guild.

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Quat commented that whether Committee is Viet Minh or not, it will paralyze present and future Govts, if it continues in existence, and will lead to Revolution.

4. I asked Quat his evaluation of effect of recent developments on Diem's prestige. Quat said he had heard very varied comments on this point in different circles. In political circles, it is felt action against Binh Xuyen, while theoretically desirable, has been too costly for population.

Population at large is generally indifferent except that those who suffered from hostilities are embittered against Govt and Binh Xuyen. Certain persons who had suffered at hands of Binh Xuyen fully approved Govt action.

5. I asked Quat if he thought Diem would succeed in crushing Binh Xuyen. He replied Binh Xuyen, as result of hostilities, would have lost one-fourth or even one-third of effectives but would take to maquis and guerrilla warfare. National Army will not be able to wipe them out. I said French had predicted civil war in event Govt moved against Binh Xuyen. However, there has been no civil war. Quat said that depends on what phrase "civil war" means. If it means guerrilla activity, there will be civil war. I commented to Quat that guerrillas to be successful need popular support, whereas Binh Xuyen seem to have no such support. Quat indicated he believed Binh Xuyen could extort supplies and degree of popular acquiescence in countryside by force of arms.

6. I asked Quat if he had been invited to Cannes by Bao Dai. He said he had received nothing official but had heard radio report that he had been invited. I asked Quat if he thought Bao Dai should return now to Viet Nam. He said he felt Bao Dai, by returning, could counteract some of worst effects of Revolutionary Committee. In fact, he said thinking of his group is that Bao Dai should return under following program:

a. Proclamation of democratic liberties, with appropriate safeguards, covering freedom of political activities and press;

b. Adoption by refehendum of a provisional charter which would be, in effect, a bill of rights;

c. Constitution of broadly representative National Committee, which would be the lower Chamber of provisional assembly, and creation of High Council which would be upper Chamber;

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d. Early holding of village and provisional elections to be followed in six or seven months by general elections for permanent, fully elected National Assembly. Quat said Bao Dai represents an element of legality on international plane as against factitious legality of Ho Chi Minh. Charter would define transitional position of Bao Dai but would not prejudice his eventual role. Most Bao Dai can hope for in long run is to head constitutional monarchy.

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7. I commented that if Diem succeeds in crushing Binh Xuyen, he will have gained in international prestige. His victory may make it harder to induce him to form representative and effective Govt and may also create serious situation for Bao Dai. Quat replied that Diem is still handling Bao Dai cautiously. With respect to Binh Xuyen, it may be said that they are now defeated, if not crushed, and they may be seeking political escape hatch. It would be good for population if Binh Xuyen could be allowed quietly disband and renounce any political claims they may have, since they still retain power to sow panic in Saigon and by acts of terrorism can vitiate Diem's success.

8. He said it would be highly advantageous for planning of Vietnamese Nationalists if US attitude toward Diem could be made clearer. I replied US Govt would continue to back Diem so long as Vietnamese people were with him. US does not wish to interfere in domestic affairs but would support popular will if this could be ascertained. Present US attitude toward Diem is favorable owing to his tackling of Binh Xuyen, his honesty, nationalism, and other personal characteristics. However, if Vietnamese people wish to make change, that is another matter. Quat asked whether I believed US aid would continue to be made on contingent basis if Vietnamese Nationalists succeeded in setting up Govt on hard, straightforward lines having a minimum

practical program with specific dates for realization. He said what is needed is to effect a complete reform of the French colonial system, mechanisms of which Viethamese Govt has inherited, and to profit by example set by Viet Minh in instilling in its adherents sense of abnegation and self-effacement. With respect to Diem Govt, Quat said, to best of his knowledge, it was conceived by French December 5, 1953 and was worked out by French in consultation with Bao Dai during ensuing six months. I told Quat that I believed US support would be forthcoming for any non-Communist Govt worked out and fully supported by Vietnamese people.

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